DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY F Schmelzer DATE 7/2/85
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
TO AUTH. REASON(S)
E. DCRSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐ RELEASABLE
DECL RELEASE IF
RELEASE DI
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

R 86

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF CONGRESS DISAPPROVES SELLING THE F-15 TO SAUDI ARABIA

The Saudis are determined to acquire an advanced aircraft and feel an urgent need to be assured that they will have a replacement for their Lightning interceptors on hand by the early 1980s. We believe they would move promptly toward purchasing another aircraft if the F-15 sale is disapproved or if a decision on the sale is substantially delayed. The French Mirage F-1 is most likely to be their choice in that event. The F-1 could be delivered almost immediately with the option to purchase the Mirage 2000 or 4000 in the early 1980s. Top Saudi leaders have expressed concern that such a shift away from the United States for a major component of the Saudi defense capability would set in train the phasing out of the present predominant American role in Saudi military development.

The political impact of a refusal to sell the F-15 could be equally significant, for the Saudi Government has made it clear it regards our willingness to provide the aircraft as symbolic of the quality of U.S. concern for the security of Saudi Arabia and the neighboring region. It is this Saudi confidence in the reliability of our commitment to the country's security that has been a central element in a longstanding bilateral relationship that has substantially served broad U.S. interests.

Saudi Arabia's immense influence in the Arab world in part stems from its close relationship with the United States. Our ties have weathered difficult periods in which prevailing Arab sentiment was strongly anti-American. Our refusal to sell the F-15 would undercut Saudi Arabia's influence in fostering moderate attitudes among the Arab states.

It would be out of character for Saudi Arabia to seek to retaliate in some overt fashion against the United States should it fail to obtain the aircraft. We believe the Saudi reaction rather would be one of deep disappointment and disillusionment, fostering the unraveling of a close, cooperative relationship carefully nurtured over many years.

In the foreseeable future we will need to seek maximum cooperation in a number of critical areas. Continued positive Saudi support of our efforts to achieve

a Middle East peace will be essential. As the peace process moves forward such support will require Saudi Arabia to make extremely difficult decisions to use its influence vigorously in pursuit of a moderate Arab consensus.

Saudi Arabia is key to restraining increases in oil prices as the pressure from other OPEC members for a significant price rise intensifies. Saudi Arabia will continue to be of critical importance in sustaining international support for the dollar. In the next few years the United States, and the world economy, will need Saudi cooperation in substantially increasing oil production. This will require enormous Saudi investment in the face of the growing realization that Saudi Arabia is already producing much more oil than its domestic income needs dictate. Saudi willingness to make such a major contribution to the welfare of the international economy will depend in large part on the Saudis' confidence that their relationship with the United States is strong, durable and supportive of Saudi security.

Drafted: NEA/ARP:JWTwinam:slb
x20503:4/20/78

Clearance: NEA:SSober